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FM AMCONSUL GUADALAJARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1165
INFO RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 2348
RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEHGD/AMCONSUL GUADALAJARA 5221

UNCLAS GUADALAJARA 000617

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [ASEC](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS: MISS SINALOA DETAINED WITH DRUG THUGS

REF: Guadalajara 506

¶1. (U) A December 23 joint military and police operation against suspected narcotraffickers in the Guadalajara suburb of Zapopan turned up an unexpected surprise: among the eight individuals detained with a quantity of guns, ammunition, and money was Laura Zuniga Huizar, currently Miss Sinaloa 2008 as well as Miss Hispanic America 2008. Also in the group was Angel Orlando Garcia, brother of Ricardo Garcia - an important leader of the Juarez drug cartel. Some of the other detained individuals are presumed to be members of the Zetas - the notorious enforcement arm of the Gulf Cartel.

¶2. (SBU) While the beauty queen's arrest dominated the press and the airwaves, and appears to substantiate the stereotype that many traffickers cannot resist flaunting their guns, girls, and gold, the real significance of this event is the growing evidence of infiltration by rival drug cartels into the Guadalajara area. As noted in reftel, the city has been dominated by the Sinaloa cartel ("Federation") which has helped maintain a relative calm compared to other areas where open conflict rages. Ricardo Garcia is an ally of Arturo Beltran Leyva (ABL) - a bitter foe of Federation leader "El Chapo" Guzman and the presumed architect of several recent attacks on police forces in Guadalajara and surrounding communities. Combined with the arrest last month of 18 alleged Zetas in the suburb of Tonalá, the presence of an important Juarez cartel figure here may presage an attempt by ABL and his allies to muscle in on the Federation's turf, which would certainly cause an upsurge in violence.

¶3. (SBU) Post is in close contact with the local authorities regarding the investigation of this incident, and will report developments. One positive factor of note is the success of the joint military-police operation, carried out from a "Mixed Operations Base" (Base de Operacion Mixta - BOM). Coordination of the various security forces in the metropolitan area has always been a challenge, but the BOM concept appears to be working well.

RAMOTOWSKI